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Senate passes Sen. Sanborn's bill that makes parole rules clear

LANSING — The Michigan Senate unanimously passed Sen. Alan Sanborn's legislation today that would make it explicit that Michigan Department of Corrections officials do not have to automatically release an offender accused of parole violations if an administrative fact-finding hearing is not held within 45 days of the offender being incarcerated for the violation.

Sanborn, R-Richmond Township, said the change is needed after the case of Patrick Selepak, whom police and prosecutors say killed Scott and Melissa Berels and a Genesee County man in February. Selepak should have been put back in prison after parole violations but was mistakenly paroled again because an administrative fact-finding hearing didn't take place within the specified time.

"The department's mistakes leave me deeply worried about how well the public is being protected from violent criminals," Sanborn said. "Already three people have died because of these errors and it's time to act. The families of Scott and Melissa deserve at least that."

According to testimony during a recent Senate hearing, corrections officials released 41 convicted felons in the past year because of the mistaken belief that the convicts had to be released if they hadn't had a hearing within 45 days of going back behind bars.

Under Senate Bill 1196, corrections officials can continue holding someone beyond 45 days if the offender has been returned to prison and is awaiting a parole violation hearing. The Senate moved swiftly on Sanborn's legislation after he introduced the measure in March.

SB 1196 now goes before the House of Representatives for consideration.

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Audio comments from Sen. Sanborn discussing his legislation are available on his audiowire page, located at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/sanborn/.